

What is blindness?

Blindness is the inability to see or a lack of vision. In the most severe cases, there's an inability to see even light. It also means that you can't correct your vision with eyeglasses, contact lenses, eye drops or other medical therapy, or surgery. Sudden vision loss is an emergency. It's important to seek immediate medical help.

Types of blindness

- **Partial blindness:** You still have some vision. People often call this "low vision."
- **Complete blindness:** You can't see or detect light. This condition is very rare.
- **Congenital blindness:** This refers to poor vision that you are born with. The causes include inherited eye and retinal conditions and non-inherited birth defects.

- **Nutritional blindness:** This term describes vision loss from vitamin A deficiency. If the vitamin A deficiency continues, damage to the front surface of the eye ([xerophthalmia](#)) This type of blindness can also make it more difficult to see at night or in dim light due to retinal cells not functioning as well.

How common is blindness?

Blindness is common throughout the world and in the U.S. It can happen to anyone.

In the U.S., about 1 million people are blind. Experts expect this number to double by 2050. There are many more people with [low vision](#). Around the world, an estimated 43 million people are living with blindness.

Symptoms that you may have while vision loss develops include:

- Blurry vision.
- Eye pain.
- Floaters and flashers.
- Sensitivity to light (photophobia).
- Sudden loss of vision, or the sudden appearance of black spots in your vision.

What causes blindness?

There are many causes of blindness, including injuries, infections and medical conditions.

Tests may include:

- The Snellen test: You're probably familiar with this test. A provider asks you to read lines of letters that get smaller as they go down the page. This test of visual acuity measures what you can see in front of you (central vision).
- Visual field testing: The visual field means more than central vision. It's what you can see to either side or above and below without moving your eye.

Definition

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines blindness as having a visual acuity of 20/200 or worse in the better eye, even with corrective lenses. It can also be defined as having a severely reduced field of vision of less than 20 degrees. 

Causes

Common causes of blindness in India include cataracts, corneal opacity, cataract surgical complications, posterior segment disorders, and glaucoma. 

National Programme for Control of Blindness

The National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI) in India has adopted the WHO's definition of blindness. The NPCB also provides re-orientation training for health personnel, school teachers, and community link workers. 

Patient education

Patient education is important to promote treatment adherence and follow-up. This can include teaching in groups, using videos, and training lay people as peer educators. 

Childhood blindness

Services for children should be tailored to their needs, and should involve parents, caregivers, teachers, and Anganwadi workers. [🔗](#)

Economic impact

Vision impairment has a significant economic impact, with an estimated annual global productivity loss of US\$411 billion. [🔗](#)